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South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees'

2000 Annual Report to the General Assembly



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 369
Columbia, South Carolina 29201



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

JAMES H. HODGES
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 11829
COLUMBIA 29211

January 1, 2000

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

Please find enclosed the 2000 South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees' Annual Report to the General Assembly. This report is required by Section 20-7-9720(10) of the enabling legislation.

I am pleased with the progress of this education initiative to date, and look forward to working with you this session as we continue our efforts to improve school readiness.

Sincerely,


Jim Hodges

Chair, South Carolina First Steps to
School Readiness Board of Trustees

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STATE DOCUMENTS

Since its inception in June, South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness has:

- Facilitated 46 county forums attended by more than 5,000 people and provided extensive technical assistance to help each of the 46 counties form First Steps county partnership boards
- Established 46 First Steps county partnership boards
- Developed and distributed the Level One (planning) grant application to all 46 county partnership boards
- Trained more than 900 county partnership board members at six all-day training sessions on the Level One grant application
- Awarded three Level One (planning) grants and reviewed six additional grant applications for decision in January
- Raised \$5,025,000 in commitments from the private sector in support of the First Steps initiative
- Begun implementation of the Results-Oriented Grantmaking program and created extensive technical assistance materials for the Level One phase of First Steps
- Begun design of the Level Two (implementation) grant application
- Developed strong, collaborative relationships with supporting state and local agencies and state-wide and local non-profits
- Made presentations to more than 300 organizations
- Developed and distributed Footnotes, the First Steps newsletter, to over 2,000 individuals and organizations
- Created a series of comprehensive documents that provide information on school readiness, needs and resources, early education, health, child care, family strengthening and transportation

An Overview of First Steps

First Steps, signed into law on June 28, 1999, is a results-oriented, state-wide, early childhood education initiative designed to ensure that South Carolina children arrive at first grade healthy and ready to succeed. The goals of First Steps, as set forth in the enabling legislation, are as follows:

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental and learning problems;
- (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to learn; and
- (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn.

At present, nearly one in five South Carolina children are assessed not ready for first grade.¹ In some counties, it is one in three or higher. First Steps provides \$20 million in state funds for fiscal year 2000 for county partnerships to help children arrive at first grade ready to succeed.

School readiness encompasses multiple dimensions of learning and development that are important for preparing a young child to enter first grade healthy and ready to succeed. The dimensions include:

- cognition and general knowledge (includes general information; problem solving skills; understanding of cause and effect; interest in learning; experience with books; ability to listen to stories and informational books and retell the most important information; opportunities to learn about the world and communicate what is learned; knowledge of colors, address, phone number, etc.);
- communication skills (includes skills in communicating effectively with children and adults, and emergent literacy skills);
- approaches to learning: dispositions or styles (includes curiosity, independence, cooperativeness, task persistence, adaptability, ability to pay attention, listen, and follow directions);

¹ This statistic is based upon 1998 CSAB data. 1999 CSAB data is not available as it has not yet been released.

- emotional well-being and social competence (includes social skills and social-emotional health and support obtained through stable caring relationships during the early years such as showing respect for others, taking turns and sharing, demonstrating confidence); and
- health and physical development (includes good physical health; appropriate gross and fine motor abilities/skills).

Focus areas for county partnerships, as set forth in the enabling legislation, include lifelong learning (including early education), health care, quality child care and transportation. First Steps mandates safeguards to ensure that funds are expended on non-duplicative, results-oriented programs that utilize the best practices known.

First Steps supports the development of public-private partnerships at the county level. Those county partnerships are given flexibility in addressing school readiness issues based on the needs and resources of each county; however, each county partnership is accountable to the First Steps Board of Trustees for fiscal management, program management and program results.

Each county partnership board can apply for Level One (planning) funding to conduct a needs and resource assessment and develop a comprehensive strategic plan to improve school readiness, as well as develop the collaborative effort toward this end. Level Two (implementation) funding will provide county partnerships with the resources to provide direct services to improve school readiness as identified in the county partnership's strategic plan. First Steps resources must be augmented with matching resources raised by the county partnership.

This report summarizes the substantial progress made to date in meeting the mandated requirements set forth in the First Steps enabling legislation and meets the reporting requirement found in Section 20-7-9720 of that Act.

The First Steps Board of Trustees

As called for in Section 20-7-9700 of the enabling legislation, the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees was established to oversee the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative. Governor Jim Hodges chairs the Board of Trustees, and Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum serves on the board. As required, the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House appointed twenty additional voting members. Ten non-voting positions for state agency and organization representatives were filled. The non-voting position for a member of the State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Child Day Care Facilities will be filled shortly, as the many vacancies on that committee have only recently been filled. The chart attached as Exhibit A identifies all trustees.

Mr. Frank Holleman serves as vice-chair of the board. Governor Jim Hodges, Mr. G. Lee Cory, Ms. Claudia Davant-DeLoach, and Dr. Harry Wright comprise the Executive

Committee. The Board of Trustees established the following committees that meet as needed, usually at least once per month:

- Strategic Planning and Administration – Mr. G. Lee Cory, Chair
- Application/Grants – Dr. Robert Saul, Chair
- Legislative and Agency Relations – No Chair
- County Relations and Oversight – Ms. Lois Mufuka Martin, Chair
- Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation – Ms. Susan DeVenny, Chair

The Board of Trustees is a diverse group of highly-respected individuals from all parts of the state. All members have made substantial contributions of time and have demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to the First Steps initiative.

The Board of Trustees is carrying out all assigned functions as mandated in Section 20-7-9720 of the enabling legislation. A brief summary of each item follows. Several items are discussed more fully in other sections of this report.

(1) Develop a comprehensive long-range initiative for improving early childhood development and increasing school readiness

Under the leadership of the Board of Trustees, an extensive, state-level strategic plan is being developed. This document will promote the development of efforts of agencies, private providers, and public and private organizations at the state and county levels, to work together to improve school readiness. The Board of Trustees is also supervising and providing guidance to the Office of the First Steps with the development of this education initiative.

(2) Promulgate regulations, establish guidelines, policies and procedures for implementation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative

The Board of Trustees oversees the Office of First Steps staff as the following items are promulgated:

- all governing documents for the Board of Trustees, the Office of First Steps and the First Steps county partnerships
- procedures to ensure that the Office of First Steps and county partnerships implement a standard fiscal accountability system that meets all state and legislative requirements
- the Level One and Level Two grant applications, supporting materials and review procedures.

(3) Provide oversight on the implementation of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness initiative at the state and county levels

The Board of Trustees is developing a broad range of oversight activities that will include comprehensive, scientifically-based evaluations at the state and county levels. Section 59-152-160 mandates a program evaluation of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative at the state and county level by an independent, external evaluator under contract to the Board of Trustees. Two of the members of the three-person committee to select an external evaluator have been appointed, as required by Section 59-152-160 of the enabling legislation. The final appointment to this committee will be made in January. A Request for Proposals is being developed to guide the selection process for an external evaluator.

The results-oriented grantmaking process² being developed by the Office of First Steps includes an internal evaluation process, which will track and monitor state-wide efforts. Evaluations are already being conducted to assess the process, products and capacity building of the results-oriented grantmaking process. In addition, staff, state agency representatives and consultants are working with the Board of Trustees to ensure that Level Two (implementation/management) grants will include a monitoring system to ensure quality programming and an evaluation system that provides information on the efficacy of the program, a continuous quality improvement system that can be used to improve the program and methods for sustaining the program if results are positive.

(4) Facilitate and direct the establishment of developing county First Steps partnerships and establish the criteria for designation of county First Steps partnerships

The Board of Trustees oversaw technical assistance activities by the Office of First Steps towards this directive, which included the following:

- participation in 46 initial county forums attended by more than 5,000 people state-wide, and corresponding provision of technical assistance to help each county form a First Steps county partnership board
- providing training to more than 900 county partnership board members at six, all-day training sessions on the Level One grant application
- incorporating all 46 county partnerships
- beginning the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status and creating and disseminating all governing documents
- implementing the results-oriented grantmaking process and creating extensive support materials for county partnership boards.

(5) Establish criteria and procedures for awarding state First Steps grants to County First Steps Partnerships

² The results-oriented grantmaking process was designed by the University of South Carolina and has been successfully used in South Carolina to improve the likelihood of achieving results.

The Applications/Grants Committee of the Board of Trustees has worked closely with the Office of First Steps to meet this challenge. A comprehensive Level One application packet was developed and provided to all county partnership boards, and the Level Two application is in development.

The Board of Trustees also approved a grant review process, attached as Exhibit B, and members of the Board of Trustees are actively participating in the Level One grant review process. Please see pages 8-9 and 10-11 for more information about the grantmaking process.

(6) Provide technical assistance, consultation services, and support to County First Steps Partnerships including: the creation and annual revision of county needs assessments; the prioritization, implementation, and evaluation of each First Steps Partnership's strategic plans based on needs assessments; and the identification of assets from other funding sources

Under the direction of the First Steps Board of Trustees, the Office of First Steps has provided extensive technical assistance and consultation to the First Steps county partnerships, including six day-long seminars attended by more than 900 representatives of county partnership boards on the Level One grant application and extensive technical assistance through attendance at county meetings, telephone conferences and e-mails. Documents are being developed to provide additional training in the areas of county needs and resource assessments and strategic planning processes, as well as identification of non-governmental funding sources. A January training conference will include training in these critical areas.

(7) Assess and develop recommendations for ensuring coordination and collaboration among service providers

Each state agency cited in the enabling legislation is represented on the Board of Trustees by the agency director or his or her official designee, and, as appropriate, agency staff serve on or assist with county partnership boards. The presence of these agency directors and staff helps ensure cooperation and collaboration among agencies. In addition, the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee works to meet this goal. See also pages 13-18 for a description of the supporting activities of state agencies.

The Office of First Steps, under the direction of the Board of Trustees, is surveying relevant state agencies, state-level non-profit organizations, institutions of higher learning and faith-based organizations about existing programs that serve children ages zero to six and their families. The results of this survey will help ensure coordination and collaboration among service providers and will provide county partnerships with extensive information about existing resources.

- (8) Establish results-oriented measures and objectives and assess whether services provided by County First Steps partnerships are meeting the goals and achieving the results established for the First Steps initiative pursuant to Chapter 152, Title 59**

To date, nine County Partnership Boards have submitted applications for Level One (planning) grants. This section of the legislation addresses activities that will begin as county partnership boards begin to implement Level Two (implementation) grants. Full internal and external evaluation procedures are being developed by the Office of First Steps, under the direction of the Board of Trustees and the Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee of the Board of Trustees. The State Department of Education is also assisting with the evaluative effort.

- (9) Receive gifts, bequests, and devises for deposit for awarding grants to First Steps Partnerships**

In conjunction with the Board of Trustees, the Office of First Steps solicits non-governmental grants, gifts and donations from private and public sources. To date, \$5,025,000 in private dollars have been committed to the First Steps initiative. Funds are received by the Comptroller General's office and held in a separate account. The State Treasurer invests the monies in the same manner as other funds under his control. A list of all non-state funds committed to date is attached as Exhibit C.

- (10) Report annually to the General Assembly by January first on activities and progress to include recommendations for changes and legislative initiatives and results of program evaluations**

The Board of Trustees and the Office of First Steps have only been in existence for six months. This report includes extensive information on activities completed to date and on the extensive plans to meet all requirements in the enabling legislation and, thereby, improve school readiness.

The Board of Trustees has two recommendations for change for the consideration of the General Assembly.

1. Increase the appropriation to First Steps to \$30 million (\$10 million more than the present \$20 million) for Fiscal Year 2001. During that year, every county is expected to move from planning to implementation, and it is clear that the additional funds will be necessary to fund adequately this education initiative.
2. Add a representative of the state technical college system to the Board of Trustees as the technical colleges have a lead role in the training of child care workers.

The Office of First Steps

The Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness ("Office of First Steps") has been established as part of the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees, as called for in Section 59-152-50 of the enabling legislation. Working The Office of First Steps has moved forward quickly and effectively to build this exciting, results-oriented education initiative, under the direction of the Board of Trustees. As one of its first official actions, the Board of Trustees hired Marie-Louise Ramsdale as Director of the Office of First Steps on August 6, 1999.

Ms. Ramsdale, with the extensive assistance of the Board of Trustees, met the challenge of setting up this new initiative, moving ahead decisively to address the following organizational challenges:

- hire, train and manage the Office of First Steps' staff, including developing a staffing plan and job descriptions;
- comply with federal and state laws and regulations that apply to non-profit organizations;
- provide for and oversee the legal and administrative set-up of the First Steps entities at the state and county levels;
- provide extensive support to the Board of Trustees and its committees as they began to implement the legislation;
- coordinate the initiatives and goals of existing state agencies with the Office of First Steps and the Board of Trustees;
- undertake an ambitious outreach effort that has resulted in the Office of First Steps staff making more than 300 presentations to public and private groups;
- create and spearhead a comprehensive fundraising strategy that has resulted in private sector commitments of \$5,025,000 to date;
- provide extensive technical assistance to county partnership boards;
- begin to implement a comprehensive public awareness communications plan, including the development of a website and publication of the Footnotes newsletter;
- establish and staff the First Steps Community Advisory Board (see Exhibit D).

In the five months since the passage of the enabling legislation, the Office of First Steps has met or made substantial progress toward all seven of its mandated duties set forth in Section 59-152-50, as appropriate at this time given the new status of First Steps:

- (1) [P]rovide to the board information on best practice, successful strategies, model programs, and financing mechanisms[.]

In developing the information required by Subsection 59-152-50(1), the Office of First Steps has worked closely with members of the Board of Trustees and board committees,

committees comprised of state agency and non-profit issues experts, and a team of professionals from the University of South Carolina Institute for Families in Society and the Department of Psychology.

Careful review of scientific literature and extensive consultations with the partners listed above have resulted in the production of drafts of the following documents:

- (1) A Summary of First Steps. This document includes:
 - an overview of the First Steps initiative;
 - extensive information about the multiple dimensions of learning and development essential to school readiness;
 - best practice information on all major components of school readiness;
 - needs of South Carolina's preschool children and resources available to children and families; and
 - model programs on the state and national levels.³
 - (2) An extensive state-level strategic plan, prepared by members of the Board of Trustees, staff of the Office of First Steps, state agency experts and the Institute for Families in Society, includes:
 - current needs and resources relating to school readiness from a state-wide perspective;
 - promising practice information from the Carnegie Starting Points report and the South Carolina Maternal, Infant and Child Health Council report and other key reports on readiness topics;
 - strategic goals developed in collaboration with the Board of Trustees;
 - key action steps; and
 - an evaluation plan.⁴
 - (3) Promising Practice Summaries in the areas of health, family strengthening, early education, parenting, child care and transportation are being created and will be printed in final form in early 2000.
- (2) [R]eview the county partnerships' plans and budgets in order to provide technical assistance and recommendations regarding local grant proposals and improvement in meeting statewide and local goals[.]

It is, at this time, too early in the process to be able to report extensively on the Office of First Steps' compliance with this responsibility. Technical assistance provision in these areas

³ This document should be ready for dissemination to the Board of Trustees no later than January 2000.

⁴ The evaluation plan will not be complete until mid-2000 after the three-person evaluation committee selects an independent external evaluator, as required by Section 59-152-160(A) of the enabling legislation. An evaluation component will be prominent in the Level Two (implementation) grant application to provide appropriate guidance to First Steps county partnership boards.

will increase substantially during 2000 as more counties receive Level One (planning) grants and receive assistance in moving to Level Two (implementation). To date, the Office of First Steps has utilized best practice information and a variety of experts from the public and private sectors to conduct the following technical assistance activities related to the Level One (planning) grant process:

- development of a comprehensive Level One training package that includes a guidebook to assist in the preparation of the Level One grant application, a sample completed Level One grant application, sample budget and timeline, and a glossary of definitions pertaining to the grant application process;
- development of a curriculum to train grant reviewers in assessment and evaluation of submitted Level One grant applications and a scoring form to guide the review process;
- creation of a pool of 25 plus grant reviewers selected from the public and private sector and approved by the Applications/Grants Committee of the Board of Trustees;
- planning and administering all-day training and review sessions for grant reviewers on November 18 and December 16; and
- working with members of the Board of Trustees' Applications/Grants Committee to formalize the results of the grant review process and submit this information to the Board of Trustees for action.

Throughout the development and implementation of the grant process, efforts have been made to ensure that the process is a fair and equitable one that guarantees that all counties have equal access to grant assistance and grant application materials.

(3) [P]rovide technical assistance, consultation and support to county partnerships to facilitate their success including, but not limited to, model programs, strategic planning, leadership development, best practice, successful strategies, collaboration, financing and evaluation[.]

Technical assistance to counties is a high priority of the Office of First Steps. Five professional staff members (two of whom are on loan from supporting state agencies – DHEC and DSS) administer a comprehensive Technical Assistance Plan to help counties build the infrastructure to improve systems and services to families and young children. To date, the Office of First Steps has completed the following technical assistance activities:

- conducted a training session for all individuals who agreed to assist voluntarily with convening the initial county-wide First Steps forums in each of the 46 counties. The training consisted of an overview of First Steps, logistics for planning a successful county-wide meeting, necessary

materials and guidance on working in collaboration with each county legislative delegation;

- provided technical assistance before each initial First Steps county-wide forum by consulting with county conveners and legislators by phone, e-mail, mail, fax, and in person to include advice on all meeting details, facilitating discussions with county legislative delegations, developing sign-in sheets and informational materials, identifying the roles and responsibilities of board members, and designing sample press and public awareness materials;
- informed more than 5,000 people who attended initial county First Steps meetings in all 46 counties about the purpose and goals of First Steps and of the roles and responsibilities of a First Steps county partnership board;
- conducted six day-long technical assistance sessions attended by more than 900 people from across the state. Topics included collaboration and detailed training in completing the Level One (planning) grant application;
- planned a two-day training conference scheduled for January 2000 with an anticipated attendance of 1,200 members of First Steps county partnership boards from across the state. Training conference topics will include the following: Level Two grant materials and application overview; conducting needs and resource assessments; strategic planning; fiscal management and accountability; evaluation; and school readiness best practice and model program information;
- fielded more than 1,000 telephone calls from county partnership members requesting technical assistance in creating county partnership boards and submitting grant applications;
- created a resource pool of individuals representing public and private agencies and entities with particular areas of expertise to assist in providing technical assistance; and
- provided continuing technical assistance by disseminating regular e-mails and other forms of written communications to county partnership boards, including answers to frequently asked questions and information about First Steps materials. On average, at least 25 e-mails are answered daily.

(4) [R]ecommend to the [B]oard the applicants meeting the criteria for First Steps partnerships and the grants to be awarded[.]

Working closely with the Board of Trustees' Applications/Grants Committee, First Steps staff created extensive informational materials to educate county partnership boards about the criteria to receive Level One (planning) funding. Six reviewers selected and approved by the Grants/Applications Committee were trained and participated in the November review, and nine reviewers were trained and participated in the December review. Additional reviewers will be trained to participate in the Level One grant reviews on a monthly basis hereafter.

Using a grant evaluation process developed in conjunction with experts from DHEC, the University of South Carolina Institute for Families in Society and the Department of Psychology, and approved by the First Steps Board of Trustees, staff and representatives of the Applications/Grants Committee recommended the first three Level One grant applications for approval at the Board of Trustees meeting on December 8. Three Level One grants have been awarded as follows: Anderson \$49,985.88, Clarendon \$46,334.80, and Greenville \$50,000.00. Six additional Level One grant applications (Beaufort, Georgetown, Greenwood, Lancaster, McCormick and Richland Counties) have been reviewed, and recommendations regarding those six will be presented to the Applications/Grants Committee in January. One grant application has already been received for the January review (Allendale). Level One grant applications will continue to be reviewed on a monthly basis as they are received and qualified applications will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval.

The Applications/Grants Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that Level One grant awards be a maximum of \$50,000. This recommendation was adopted by the Board of Trustees.

- (5) [S]ubmit an annual report to the [B]oard by December first which includes, but is not limited to, the statewide needs and resources available to meet the goals and purposes of [First Steps], the ongoing progress and results of the First Steps to School Readiness initiative statewide and locally, fiscal information on the expenditure of funds, and recommendations and legislative proposals to further implement the [First Steps] initiative statewide[.]

This annual report was submitted to the Board of Trustees on December 1, 1999 and included all required information. A copy of that report is available upon request from the Office of First Steps.

- (6) [P]rovide for on-going data collection and contract for an in-depth performance audit due January 1, 2003 and every three years thereafter, to ensure that statewide goals and requirements of the [First Steps] initiative are being met[.]

The Board of Trustees' Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee has taken the lead in this area. This committee is comprised of Ms. Susan DeVenny, Chair; Senator Linda Short; Representative Bob Walker; Ms. Claudia Davant-DeLoach; and Dr. Stan Butkus. Dr. Baron Holmes of the S.C. Budget and Control Board and Jerry Dell Gimarc of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, as well as Office of First Steps staff,

assist this committee. The committee has extensively reviewed the requirements set forth in the enabling legislation. Members have also reviewed the scientific literature on evaluation of early childhood education initiatives and are developing an evaluation approach that includes:

- (1) **process evaluation:** a thorough review of how the First Steps initiative is operating at the state and county levels, including the nature of collaboration, the organization of the county partnerships, the engagement of county agencies and non-profits, etc.;
- (2) **program evaluation:** specific review of priority program components to determine effectiveness and efficiency as compared with best practices identified by national research;
- (3) **longitudinal tracking:** following cohorts of pre-schoolers from birth certificate data through childhood services to school data on readiness and academic performance, using the state client masterfile data system; and
- (4) **summative evaluation:** answering the bottom line question of how effective First Steps is in producing specified school readiness results.

The Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee reviewed some of the most prominent national studies regarding the effectiveness of early childhood education and other services. The committee considered the role of the three-person committee mandated in Section 59-152-160(A) of the enabling legislation and discussed the corresponding duties of the Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee. The Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee has identified the following short-term goals to be accomplished as soon as possible:

- (1) Define school readiness, as readiness is the focal result emphasized throughout the enabling legislation;
- (2) Provide input and support for the new readiness assessment being developed by the State Department of Education;
- (3) Supervise the gathering of state and local data, as required by Section 59-152-50(6);
- (4) Design the "internal evaluation policies and procedures for [c]ounty First Steps [p]artnerships for an annual review of the functioning of the partnership, implementation strategies and progress toward the interim goals and benchmarks", see Section 59-152-160(A); and
- (5) Work with the three-person evaluation committee and the external evaluator in assessing the progress and results of the First Steps initiative.

- (7) [C]oordinate the First Steps to School Readiness initiative with all other state, federal, and local public and private efforts to promote good health and school readiness of young children and support for their families.

Since the Office of First Steps officially began operation in August, 1999, First Steps staff have made more than 300 presentations to state and local public and private organizations. Through these presentations, First Steps staff have informed more than 10,000 people about the First Steps initiative and how it relates to existing programs. The 900 county partnership board members trained by First Steps staff in six technical assistance seminars and the more than 5,000 people who attended initial county-wide forums in all 46 counties included representatives of numerous agencies and organizations state-wide.

State agencies that provide readiness-related services to children and families have played a key role in the development of First Steps. On March 25, 1999, Governor Jim Hodges convened the First Steps Inter-Agency Work Group. This group includes senior-level representatives from numerous cabinet and non-cabinet agencies, as well as state-wide non-profits.

Several teams were established as part of the Inter-Agency Work Group as follows: Evaluation/Goals Team, under the direction of Baron Holmes of the S.C. Budget and Control Board; Grant Application Design Team, under the direction of Deirdra Singleton of the S.C. Department of Health and Human Services; Collaboration Team, under the direction of Jerry Dell Gimarc of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; Conference Planning Team, under the direction of Krista Kustra of the Center for Child Care Career Development; and the Promising Practices Team, under the direction of Betty Carnes of S.C. Health and Human Services. The Inter-Agency Work Group and its teams continue to meet on an as-needed basis to ensure that the various agencies and organizations are working effectively with First Steps.

Representatives from the following agencies continue to work closely with the Board of Trustees and Office of First Steps to coordinate the First Steps initiative with existing public and private programs at the state and local levels:

- S.C. Department of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Services
- S.C. Budget and Control Board
- S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
- S.C. Department of Education
- S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control
- S.C. Department of Mental Health
- S.C. Department of Health and Human Services
- S.C. Department of Social Services
- S.C. State Library
- S.C. Department of Transportation⁵

⁵ The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice has contacted the Office of First Steps and will be providing support to this initiative in 2000.

The section below highlights the support provided by these agencies during the first months of the First Steps initiative.

S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services

Director Rick Wade, who serves as a member of the Board of Trustees and on the Strategic Planning and Administration Committee, has provided critical information to the Board in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse. Elaine Dowdy, Director of Prevention and Intervention Programs in the Division of Programs and Services, has also provided information and support to the Office of First Steps. Director Wade and Ms. Dowdy have also worked with prevention specialists at all county offices to encourage and support their involvement in First Steps county partnership boards. These local experts will continue to provide critical information in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse as it relates to the early development of children.

S.C. Budget and Control Board

Mr. Bobby Bowers serves on the Board of Trustees and on the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee. Dr. Baron Holmes has provided extensive support to the Board of Trustees and the Office of First Steps in the areas of data development, strategic planning and evaluation. He has attended meetings of the Board of Trustees, as necessary, and has served as staff to the Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee of the Board. In addition, Pete Bailey and other staff of the Office of Research and Statistics have helped to define and summarize data on factors affecting school readiness at both the state and county level.

S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN)

Dr. Stan Butkus, State Director, serves on the Board of Trustees and is an active member of the Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee. Dr. Brent Koyle, Deputy State Director, serves on the First Steps Inter-Agency Work Group.

The S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs sent letters to each local DSN board advising of information regarding the county forums. Most local DSN Boards sent representatives to the initial forums and have continued to provide support as county partnership boards develop. The agency has also provided staff to help plan the January 2000 training conference and will furnish staff to help with registration at the conference.

The Department of Disabilities and Special Needs contracts with local boards for 135 early interventionists to provide in-home support and training to over 2,000 developmentally-delayed children ages birth to six years.

S.C. Department of Education

Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum serves as an ex officio, voting member of the Board of Trustees. Early childhood associates for parenting, family literacy and early childhood education serve on the Inter-Agency Work Group and provide technical assistance and information concerning their work with school administrators, teachers, school districts, agencies providing family support services, parenting/family literacy personnel and families. They continue to provide technical assistance in writing and reviewing various First Steps documents.

Early childhood associates have encouraged local schools to become involved with First Steps through visits to the school, letters, e-mails, phone calls and presentations. First Steps staff have been invited to make presentations at various state-level Department of Education meetings. Early childhood associates helped staff several First Steps county forums.

The State Department of Education serves as the fiscal agent for the Office of First Steps and, in that role, provides extensive assistance with human resources, accounts receivable and payable, and procurement.

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)

The DHEC First Steps Implementation Team was created on March 30, 1999 to support the First Steps initiative. Team members represent the Office of Planning in the Commissioner's Office, and the Divisions of State and National Initiatives, Community Health, Preventive and Personal Health and Public Health Practice in the Health Services Deputy Area. Other staff assumed roles as internal support staff to the lead DHEC representatives.

DHEC's support for First Steps includes the following:

- Commissioner Doug Bryant serves on the Board of Trustees and on the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee;
- Patty Dod Lolas is on loan from DHEC as staff to the Office of First Steps;
- Since April 1999, Jerry Dell Gimarc has provided leadership for the Collaboration Team, served as a presenter at several initial county forums, and is assisting the Fiscal Accountability and Evaluation Committee;
- DHEC staff provided essential support to the county conveners as they coordinated the election of county-level boards;
- Nancy Whittle and her staff serve on the Training Conference Planning Team; and
- DHEC employees have been instrumental in the work of committees working on evaluation procedures, public messaging, and grant application development.

One of DHEC's most critical roles has been to provide personnel to serve as resource consultants and writers during the creation of health concept and promising practice documents. Led by Max Learner, Ph.D., DHEC professionals have also provided support in the development of the grant application and evaluation materials.

Joyce Brown has been the agency liaison from DHEC to First Steps and has provided support to the Office of First Steps in the following ways:

- coordinating extensive administrative support in communicating with county partnerships and newly-elected board members;
- disseminating critical information about First Steps throughout the agency by attending a variety of central office and district meetings and by disseminating First Steps information by written communications and e-mails;
- attending all full meetings of the Board of Trustees and serving as a resource to the Board Strategic Planning and Administration Committee; and
- representing the Office of First Steps as a presenter at several initial county forums.

As mandated in the legislation, a representative of DHEC serves on the county partnership board in each of the 46 counties.

S.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

S.C. DHHS representatives have served as active members of the Inter-Agency Work Group and have participated on the following working teams: Collaboration, Promising Practices, Evaluation, Training Conference Planning and Grant Application Design. Dr. Sam Griswold, Director, serves on the Board of Trustees and on the Applications/Grants Committee.

The Grant Application Design Team, chaired by DHHS staff, played a vital role in drafting the Level One grant application. Those team members are now assisting the Office of First Steps in developing the Level One grant contract.

Under DHHS leadership, the Promising Practices Committee was instrumental in developing major documents in each key issue area. DHHS staff developed the child care concept paper and needs assessment as well as other issues-oriented materials that will be disseminated to the County Partnership Boards at the January 2000 training conference. DHHS staff has also provided training to the Office of First Steps staff on child care and Medicaid issues.

DHHS is also undertaking a state-wide Child Care Work Force Study. This study will examine staff qualifications to care for children and recommend measures the state might take to better prepare child care workers to educate children and to reduce the high turnover rate in these critical positions.

S.C. Department of Mental Health

Director Stephen M. Soltys, M.D., serves as a member of the Board of Trustees and on the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee and has provided extensive input on mental health issues affecting school readiness. Staff of the Department of Mental Health are assisting First Steps with the development of its strategic plan.

The Department of Mental Health has sent informational materials on First Steps to its 17 community mental health centers and has encouraged staff members to serve as members of the county partnership boards.

Jerome H. Hanley, Ph.D., Director of the Division of Children, Adolescents and Their Families, submitted a concept paper to the Office of First Steps. This paper gives an overview of services that support the positive development of child mental health and summarizes assessment and treatment services available in the state for children, adolescents and their families.

The S. C. Department of Mental Health continues to work closely with the BabyNet program and to promote the development of expanded mental health services for young children. "Futures," a program for the children of parents suffering from mental illness, is being expanded, and there are plans for the development of a therapeutic nursery at Hall Institute.

S.C. Department of Social Services

Director Libba Patterson serves on the Board of Trustees and on the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee. Director of Community Development Leon Love is on loan as full-time staff to the Office of First Steps.

Staff from the Department of Social Services have provided critical input concerning social service issues affecting the state's children. A representative of the agency attended each of the 46 initial county forums and now serves as a member of every County Partnership Board. DSS is also working with county-level service providers to increase their knowledge and commitment to the components that affect school readiness. Information on these topics has been added to existing agency training programs and is being communicated to all county offices.

In addition, agency representatives have been key members of the Inter-Agency Work Group and have provided strong support to the committees that developed concept and promising practice papers.

DSS staff were instrumental in the development of the grant application process and assisted during the six technical assistance sessions in October and November.

S.C. State Library

Director Jim Johnson serves on the First Steps Board of Trustees and on the County Relations and Oversight Committee. The South Carolina State Library, in cooperation with First Steps and the Association of Public Library Administrators, developed the Early Childhood Teacher Resource Collection of books in every public library to help early childhood teachers improve their skills. The Early Childhood Teacher Resource Video Collection Catalogue, which lists training videotapes for early childhood teachers, has been updated.

Recognizing the impact that reading and books have on children's development, the State Library has produced a *Born to Read* booklist for babies and toddlers and *I Can Read it Myself* booklist for beginning readers.

The State Library is actively supporting public libraries' role on county partnership boards. First Steps was also featured on the front page of "News for South Carolina Libraries," which is distributed to librarians, library trustees and members of the volunteer groups supporting libraries across South Carolina.

State Library staff has also served as an important resource on public library and literacy issues for the Board of Trustees and the Office of First Steps.

S.C. Department of Transportation

Susan Jones serves on the Board of Trustees and the Legislative and Agency Relations Committee as designee for Director Betty Mabry. The Department of Transportation is also offering its employees different ways to become involved with the education process of not only their own children, but also other children in their communities. SCDOT will provide training to its employees that will help them make sure their children reach first grade ready to learn. Employees will also be provided with tips on assisting their school-aged children with daily homework assignments and on communicating with their child's teacher. Also, through the "South Carolina Department of Transportation Cares About Roads, Environment, and Safety Program" (SCDOT C.A.R.E.S.), SCDOT employees will be trained to go into elementary schools state-wide and teach young people about the importance of South Carolina roads and highways, safety and protecting the environment. Further, SCDOT will be working with county partnerships to find solutions to transportation issues.

Other Matters:

Section 59-152-60 of the enabling legislation provides in part that "[t]he Office of First Steps to School Readiness, in collaboration with each county legislative delegation, shall initiate county forums for the purpose of bringing together stakeholders who are actively

involved or interested in early childhood development and education so as to initiate a [c]ounty First Steps [p]artnership.”

Working in collaboration with each county legislative delegation, the Office of First Steps rapidly created and implemented a strategy to prepare volunteer county conveners to assist with the logistics for initial county-wide forums in each of the 46 counties. County forums were held in all 46 counties on or before November 9, 1999, with the vast majority held in September and early October.

The Office of First Steps also provided extensive coordination and technical assistance with the initial forums, as detailed above, in each of the 46 counties. Specifically, First Steps staff members were present at each initial county forum, and in many cases, attended follow-up meetings as necessary or as requested.

Section 59-152-70 of the enabling legislation outlines the powers and duties for each First Steps county partnership board. At present, the county partnership boards are in the process of adopting by-laws, as established by the Board of Trustees' County Relations and Oversight Committee. The standard county by-laws provide for the creation of a periodic meeting schedule, as required by the enabling legislation, and include a conflict of interest provision and a statement on compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (a current copy of which is attached to the county by-laws). The Office of First Steps is continuing to work with county partnership boards to ensure that all boards comply with other outlined powers and duties as set forth in Section 59-152-70.

A chief financial officer, with twenty years experience in South Carolina state government finance procedures and systems, was hired and began work on December 2, allowing the Office of First Steps to move ahead with developing fiscal policies and procedures. This fiscal information will be provided to all county partnership boards no later than early 2000. In addition, the January training conference will include sessions on fiscal accountability.

Section 20-7-9700 states that the First Steps Board of Trustees is an eleemosynary corporation. Therefore, the Board of Trustees elected to be incorporated under and governed by the provisions of the South Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act and is applying for recognition of exemption from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Section 59-152-70(E) states that “to be designated a County First Steps Partnership, the county or multi-county partnership must be organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.” For the sake of simplicity and in order to save considerable time and expense in obtaining Section 501(c)(3) status for each First Steps county partnership, each partnership will be included in a group exemption request by the Board of Trustees when it files its Application for Recognition of Exemption. (This procedure will save the

Office of First Steps \$22,500 in I.R.S. fees.)⁶ Recommendation has been made by the Office of First Steps' attorney to retain the services of a single qualified entity to handle tax reporting and disclosure for all of the county partnership boards as well as the Board of Trustees. This will assure consistent and accurate tax and financial planning, reporting and disclosure by all county partnership boards. First Steps' chief financial officer will oversee matters relating to tax reporting and disclosure.

As called for in Sections 59-152-130 and 59-152-150, the Office of First Steps is working under the guidance of the First Steps Board of Trustees to develop and require county partnerships to adopt and implement a standard fiscal accountability system, which will include the following items:

- A uniform, standardized system of accounting
- Internal controls
- Payroll
- Fidelity bonding
- Chart of accounts
- Contract management and monitoring
- Guidelines for competitive bids for purchases/procurement
- Guidelines regarding annual match, including in-kind contributions.

The chief financial officer is developing extensive materials, including a finance manual, to ensure that all requirements of these sections are met. The State Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services are assisting him. Additionally, as permitted by Section 59-152-150, the Office of First Steps has issued a Request for Proposal for qualified outside assistance with the development and implementation of the standard fiscal accountability system.

⁶ Although this procedure relieves each of the county partnerships covered by the group exemption letter from having to file its own Application of Recognition of Exemption and paying a filing fee plus professional fees, it does not relieve each of the corporations of the requirements of filing an Annual Information Return (IRS Form 990) and maintaining compliance with Section 501(c)(3).

Exhibit A

South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees

LAST	FIRST	CATEGORY	APPT. BY
Hodges	Jim	Governor	
Tenenbaum	Inez	State Superintendent of Education	
Short	Linda	Senate	Hodges
Smith, Jr.	James	House	Hodges
Richardson	Terry	Business Community	Hodges
Holleman	Frank	Business Community	Hodges
Jones	Rubye	Early Childhood Educator	Hodges
Broxton	Kay	Early Childhood Educator	Hodges
DeVenny	Susan	Parent of Young Child	Hodges
Polite-Caldwell	Tina	Parent of Young Child	Hodges
Middleton	Juanita	Med/Childcare Provider	Hodges
Wright	Harry	Med/Childcare Provider	Hodges
Davant-DeLoach	Claudia	Business Community	Drummond
Martin	Lois Mufuka	Parent of Young Child	Drummond
Wuori	Dan	Early Childhood Educator	Drummond
Saul	Robert	Med/Childcare Provider	Drummond
Cory	Lee	Business Community	Wilkins
Galloway	Margaret	Parent of Young Child	Wilkins
Ballard	Doris	Early Childhood Educator	Wilkins
Anderson	Vernon	Med/Childcare Provider	Wilkins
Walker	Robert	Designee/House Education & Public Works Committee	Townsend
Matthews	John	Designee/Senate Education Committee	Setzler
Patterson	Libba	Department of Social Services	
Bryant	Doug	Department of Health & Environmental Control	
Griswold	Sam	Department of Health & Human Services	
Soltys	Stephen	Department of Mental Health	
Butkus	Stan	Department Disabilities & Special Needs	
Wade	Rick	Department of Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse Services	
Mabry	Elizabeth	Department of Transportation	
Bowers	Bobby	Budget & Control Board, Office of Reseach & Statistics	
Johnson	Jim	SC State Library	
Spivey	Sonia	SC Transportation Association	

FIRST STEPS REVIEW PROCESS FOR LEVEL ONE GRANT APPLICATIONS

- I. Identification of pool of grant application reviewers
 - A. Several teams of three (3) reviewers per team
 - B. Each team to include:
 1. One (1) member of Board of Trustees Grant Application Committee who will serve as chair of a team
 2. Two (2) others representing categories outlined in First Steps enabling legislation and approved by the Board of Trustees Grant Application Committee
 - C. Office of First Steps contacts potential reviewers to confirm their willingness to participate in Level One Application reviews for a minimum period of six months, with involvement in at least three to four application review sessions during that period, as needed.
 - D. Office of First Steps sends letter to each reviewer with instructions about review process and conflict of interest forms, along with blank Grant Application Package. Reviewers must return conflict of interest form to Office of First Steps prior to training session.
- II. Receipt of grant applications by Office of First Steps
 - A. Staff reviews each application received for adherence to established grant application procedures/follows up with County Partnership contact, as necessary.
- III. Training of reviewers and review of grant applications
 - A. Potential reviewers will be screened for conflict of interest prior to participation in application review process.
 - B. One-day session is held where reviewers are trained in the review/evaluation of Level One Grant Applications.
 - C. After training, reviewers in teams of three (3) will receive County Partnerships' Level One Grant Applications for evaluation/scoring.
 - D. Each member of the team will independently evaluate and score the application in accordance with the review/evaluation criteria, except for the budget section. The team will meet to arrive at a final score for the application. The budget section will be evaluated and scored collectively by the team. The teams will make recommendations about each application (whether to recommend funding, funding pending revisions in the application, or to not recommend funding at the time). Reviewers will provide specific feedback to the Office of First Steps regarding the Partnerships' applications.
 - E. The team's recommendations about grant applications will be summarized by Office of First Steps with approval of the summary by the Board of Trustees Application Committee reviewer.
- IV. Grant Application Committee meets to discuss the Teams' summary and to make Committee recommendation to Board of Trustees about grant awards. Summaries will be provided in advance to Grant Application Committee members.
- V. Board of Trustees considers Grant Application Committee's recommendations and makes final decisions about grant awards.
- VI. Governor, as Chair of Board of Trustees, together with members of Board of Trustees, announces grant awards in late December (near Christmas) and each subsequent month, thereafter.
- VII. Process is repeated monthly, as needed, thereafter.

Exhibit C

Private Sector Commitments to First Steps

<i>Company/Foundation</i>	<i>Gift Amount</i>
Westinghouse	\$ 400,000.00
Duke Energy	\$ 550,000.00
Bank of America	\$1,000,000.00
Wachovia	\$ 500,000.00
CP&L	\$ 500,000.00
Springs	\$1,000,000.00
Duke Staley	\$ 25,000.00
TOTAL ANNOUNCED COMMITMENTS	\$3,975,000.00
TOTAL UNANNOUNCED COMMITMENTS	\$1,050,000.00
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR COMMITMENTS	\$5,025,000.00

Exhibit D

First Steps Community Advisory Board

M/M	LAST	FIRST	POSITION	COMPANY
Mrs.	Adams	Dolly Deselle	Community Volunteer	retired educator
Mr.	Anderson, Jr.	Joe M.	President	BellSouth
Ms.	Bagley	Betty	Superintendent	Bamberg School District
Mr.	Bennett	James	Senior Vice President	First Citizens Bank & Trust
Ms.	Berry	Evelyn	Exec. Director	SC School Boards Association
Ms.	Berry	Charlotte	Board Chair	United Way of SC
Ms.	Bolden	Myrna	Director - Child care	SC Head Start Association
Mrs.	Bowles	Crandall	Chair, Pres. & CEO	Springs Industries
Ms.	Boyd-Scotland	JoAnn	President	Denmark Tech.
Ms.	Cook	Zandra	Principal	Easterling Primary School
Mr.	Crech	Floyd	Coordinator, Early Childhood	Florence School District One
Ms.	Davant-DeLoach	Claudia	Attorney-State Director SC	AT&T
Ms.	Diggs	Mary Lynne	Director	SC Head Start Collaboration Office
Dr.	Farish	C. Morrison	Chapter President	SC-American Academy of Pediatrics
Mr.	Flemming	Clente	Sr. Vice Pres. Personnel	Nations Bank
Mr.	Gaither	Herman	Superintendent	Beaufort County School District
Ms.	Gist	Beverly	Infection Control Nurse	Also AME Zion Rep.
Rev.	Givens	W.E.	President	SC Baptist Church Association
Ms.	Green	Michelle Renee	Manifest Operator	Frigidaire Company
Ms.	Hicks	Jackie B.	President	SCEA
Mrs.	Hipp	Anna Kate	Volunteer	Lexington School District One
Mr.	Hodge	Clare	Coordinator, Early Childhood	Wyche, Burgess, Freeman & Parham
Mr.	Holleman	Frank	Attorney	Bethany Child Development Center
Ms.	Kahl	Pamela F.	Director	Carolina Community Actions, Inc.
Mr.	Kellogg	Walter H.	Executive Director	Junior League-Columbia
Mrs.	Lafitte	Helen	Veterinarian/ Mother	The Bank of SC
Mr.	Lane, Jr.	Hugh	Pres. & CEO	Duke Power Company
Mr.	Lomax	John	VP Business & Community Relations	Fairfield County Library
Ms.	McMaster	Sarah D.	Director	
Ms.	Mitchell	Freida		
Mr.	Nance	Maceo	President Emeritus, SCSU	
Ms.	Nord	Cindy	Vice President	Nord Family Foundation
Mr.	Rainsford	Bettis	Executive VP	Delta Woodside Industries
Ms.	Raynor	Pat	President	SC PTA
The Hon.	Riley	Joe	Mayor	City of Charleston
Dr.	Rushton	Francis	Pediatrician	SC Chapter of Pediatrics

Exhibit D

First Steps Community Advisory Board

Mr.	Scarborough	Claude	Attorney	Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough
Mr.	Schwallie	Ambrose	President	Westinghouse (Sav. River Site)
Mr.	Sellers	Ed	Pres & CEO	Blue Cross
Mrs.	Shaw	Minor	Community Volunteer	Pres., Micco Corporation
Mr.	Schrum	Roger	Public Affairs	SCANA
Dr.	Shi	Susan	Chair	Greenville Success by Six Board
Mr.	Spence	Will	Pres. & CEO	Wachovia Bank, N.A.
Ms.	Swanson	Julie	Professor-School of Educ.	College of Charleston
Mr.	Timmerman	Bill	Chair & CEO	SCANA
Ms.	Washington	Gloria	NASW Representative	DSS
Mr.	Wendell	Doug	Pres. & CEO	Burroughs & Chapin
Mr.	Whitney	William B.		Urban League of the Upstate, Inc.
Mr.	Whittle	Mack	Chair & CEO	Carolina First
Mr.	Wideman	Frank	President	The Self Foundation
Ms.	Youmans	Edna	Early Childhood Teacher	Allendale Primary School